



A Theory-Based Approach to private Business EFQM Model Implementation: Aligning Companies with Saudi Vision

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ABSTRACT

Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 aims for economic diversification and private sector empowerment, emphasizing the role of private businesses in sustainable growth. To achieve corporate excellence, Saudi businesses are adopting quality management frameworks like the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM). However, implementing EFQM faces challenges like cultural resistance and limited financial resources. This study develops a conceptual framework integrating EFQM enablers with Vision 2030's strategic priorities, highlighting critical enablers like leadership, strategy, people, processes, partnerships, and resources, aiming to improve operational performance, human capital development, innovation capacity, and governance effectiveness. By addressing these key areas, organizations can better align their objectives with national goals and foster a culture of continuous improvement. Ultimately, this framework serves as a roadmap for businesses looking to navigate the complexities of the evolving market landscape while contributing to the broader vision of national development.

1. Introduction

Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 represents a comprehensive and ambitious economic transformation roadmap that seeks to shift the nation away from its historical dependency on oil revenues toward a more diversified and sustainable economy (Altalhi, 2023). This national strategy was introduced to address multiple socio-economic challenges, such as unemployment, fluctuating oil prices, and limited private sector contribution, while enhancing Saudi Arabia's regional and global standing. The plan assigns a pivotal role to the private sector, emphasizing its importance in driving economic diversification, technological advancement, job creation, and innovation across industries (Abdullateef et al., 2023). The Vision 2030 blueprint highlights clear objectives that aim to strengthen business performance, governance, and operational efficiency and foster a national culture of excellence and innovation (Aichouni et al., 2020). One of the most significant tools that can aid Saudi Arabia in achieving the goals outlined in Vision 2030 is the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) model. The EFQM model is a comprehensive framework that provides Business with a structured approach to achieving excellence across all areas of operation. It emphasizes the importance of leadership, strategy, people, processes, partnerships, and resources in driving sustainable success (Alshammari & Alghamdi, 2020; Fonseca, 2022). The EFQM model is not simply a set of theoretical guidelines; rather, it serves as a practical tool that Business can utilize to continuously assess their performance, identify areas for improvement, and implement strategic initiatives that foster long-term growth and competitiveness. Vision 2030's ambitious goals place unprecedented pressure on Saudi private businesses to raise efficiency, competitiveness, and governance standards to meet national and international expectations. Traditional management practices alone are insufficient to cope with these demands. EFQM provides a scientifically validated, flexible framework capable of guiding businesses through continuous improvement while aligning with Vision 2030's pillars such as human capital development, innovation ecosystems, digitalization, and public-private collaboration. Its structured enablers allow Saudi businesses to address Vision 2030's challenges with clear pathways toward performance excellence and economic contribution.

The importance of EFQM lies in its holistic approach to business excellence. Unlike many other models that focus solely on operational efficiency or financial outcomes, EFQM integrates multiple dimensions of Business performance, ensuring that businesses consider both internal capabilities and external stakeholder expectations. This comprehensive perspective is particularly relevant in the Saudi context, where Business must balance rapid economic growth with social development, regulatory compliance, and the evolving demands of an increasingly diverse market (Alawwad, 2024). Vision 2030 provides an ideal platform for the application of the EFQM model because both share common values and objectives. The Vision 2030 agenda emphasize the need for continuous improvement, innovation, and a high standard of governance all of which are core principles within the EFQM framework (Alhamad et al., 2024). Vision 2030's focus on developing human capital, promoting digital transformation, and encouraging private sector growth aligns directly with EFQM's emphasis on leadership development, strategic alignment, and process optimization. Although the EFQM

model has proven successful in many global contexts, its relevance in Saudi Arabia is rooted in its alignment with Vision 2030's priorities, rather than as an international benchmark (Alawwad, 2024). The model's emphasis on continuous improvement, innovation, and stakeholder satisfaction directly resonates with the national objectives of enhancing competitiveness, improving productivity, and fostering a high-performing private sector. The application of EFQM principles offers Saudi businesses a structured pathway to strengthen their internal operations while meeting the policy directives laid out by Vision 2030 (Alhamad et al., 2024). However, the implementation of EFQM within the Saudi private sector has encountered several challenges that complicate its widespread adoption. A significant barrier is the gap between existing quality management practices and the strategic transformation goals outlined in Vision 2030. While many Businesses recognize the importance of quality frameworks, integrating EFQM principles into daily operations and long-term strategic planning remains inconsistent (Ghreeb et al., 2021). In many cases, businesses lack the expertise, resources, and Business culture necessary to fully leverage the EFQM framework for sustained excellence (Ibrahim et al., 2021).

Cultural resistance to change further complicates the implementation of quality management models. Many private sector Business continue to operate within traditional hierarchical structures that are often slow to embrace participatory management, innovation-driven thinking, and performance-oriented systems that EFQM promotes (Aichouni et al., 2020; Sayyid, 2024). Employees and leadership accustomed to conventional business practices may perceive quality models as overly bureaucratic or disruptive, leading to hesitation and limited buy-in across Business levels (Aljohani & Albliwi, 2022). Financial and resource constraints also limit EFQM adoption, especially among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that form a significant portion of the Saudi private sector (Aljabri et al., 2024). These Business often face difficulties in allocating the necessary budget for training, process re-engineering, and technology upgrades required for the successful integration of EFQM practices (Biygautane & Clegg, 2024). Furthermore, leadership commitment and strategic alignment are not always present or sufficiently developed to support the long-term objectives of business excellence programs (Alawwad, 2024). This absence can lead to fragmented efforts and a lack of coherence in implementing initiatives. As a result, organizations may struggle to achieve the desired outcomes and sustain improvements over time (Alnaser, & Saeed, 2018; Araya & Miras, 2015; Araya et al., 2021b; Araya et al., 2021a; Araya et al., 2022; Alsikkah, Alabbasi, Saeed, & Alnaser, 2018; Saeed, Bekhet, & Sciences, 2018).

Despite these challenges, Vision 2030 offers a strong enabling environment that can facilitate more effective EFQM implementation. The government has introduced a variety of policy measures, including financial incentives, regulatory reforms, and public-private partnerships that encourage private sector participation in the national transformation process (Aseery & Aseri, 2024; Ezmigna et al., 2024). These interventions aim to create the necessary institutional and operational frameworks for businesses to adopt quality management practices and enhance their competitiveness (Salam, 2022). Moreover, Vision 2030 emphasizes human capital development, digital transformation, and innovation as fundamental pillars of economic growth. The alignment of these priorities with EFQM enablers allows Saudi businesses to approach quality management from a holistic perspective that integrates technological advancements, workforce capability building, and customer-focused service delivery (Petrović et al., 2022; Bocoya-Maline et al., 2024). By leveraging these national priorities, Business can overcome many of the structural and cultural barriers associated with EFQM implementation (Dhurandhar & Kumar, 2024).

This study aims to establish a conceptual framework that aligns EFQM enablers with Vision 2030's strategic objectives, offering Saudi private businesses a structured model for achieving corporate excellence. By integrating key EFQM dimensions including processes, people, policy and strategy, and partnerships and resources the framework seeks to close the gap between current business practices and the national transformation agenda (Alshammari & Alghamdi, 2020). Additionally, the framework offers practical insights into overcoming implementation challenges by identifying supportive strategies tailored to the Saudi business environment (Aljabri et al., 2024). The objective of this paper is to focus on how SMEs can benefit from EFQM to improve the business by enhancing operational efficiency, increasing competitiveness, and ensuring long-term sustainability. In addition, this paper aims to identify the key EFQM enablers that contribute to business excellence, examine the role of Vision 2030 as a moderating factor, establish the relationship between EFQM implementation and corporate excellence, and provide strategic recommendations for private businesses striving to improve their quality management practices.

2. Literature Review

The transformation of Saudi Arabia's economy under Vision 2030 has placed significant emphasis on enhancing private sector performance, achieving sustainable economic diversification, and promoting Business excellence. In this context, quality management frameworks have gained increasing importance as tools to support businesses in aligning with national development goals. Among these frameworks, the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) model has emerged as a highly relevant and adaptable approach for Saudi Business. EFQM provides a structured framework that enables businesses to improve leadership, optimize processes, develop human capital, and foster innovation all of which directly support the objectives outlined in Vision 2030. This literature review explores how the EFQM model aligns with Saudi Arabia's national transformation agenda, highlights the specific opportunities and

challenges of its implementation within the Kingdom's private sector, and reviews empirical studies that demonstrate its growing relevance in supporting Business excellence across various industries. In the context of Saudi Arabia's ambitious Vision 2030 agenda, the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) model has become an increasingly significant framework for guiding private sector transformation and enhancing Business excellence. The Kingdom's national transformation strategy aims to achieve economic diversification, reduce reliance on oil revenues, and foster a globally competitive, knowledge-based economy. As Saudi Arabia intensifies its reform efforts, EFQM has gained attention for its alignment with Vision 2030's strategic priorities, offering Saudi Business a comprehensive framework to improve business performance, operational efficiency, leadership, innovation, and human capital development (Alawwad, 2024; Aichouni et al., 2020; Abdullateef et al., 2023).

EFQM supports Saudi Business by providing a structured approach for aligning internal processes, leadership practices, and performance outcomes with Vision 2030's policy objectives. It offers Saudi businesses a systematic model to ensure that their strategies directly contribute to national development priorities, including economic diversification, private sector empowerment, and sustainable growth (Martusewicz et al., 2024; Bukvič, 2022). Leadership excellence remains a critical element of both Vision 2030 and EFQM, where visionary leadership fosters cultural transformation, strategic foresight, and effective stakeholder engagement to guide Business through ongoing economic reforms (Alshammari & Alghamdi, 2020; Fonseca, 2022). In Saudi Arabia, strategic alignment is essential as Business respond to rapidly changing markets and technological advancements. EFQM's emphasis on long-term planning enables businesses to integrate their strategic objectives with Vision 2030 goals, promoting operational efficiency and driving industrial diversification, innovation, and regional development (Alhamad et al., 2024; Ezmigna et al., 2024). In this way, EFQM directly supports the Kingdom's national vision of becoming a global economic leader.

Human capital development is at the core of Vision 2030 and represents a key area where EFQM directly contributes to Saudi Arabia's national transformation. The Kingdom has made significant investments in education reform, vocational training, labor market participation, and gender inclusion to prepare a highly skilled workforce that can drive private sector growth (Aseery & Aseri, 2024; Alhamad et al., 2024). EFQM complements these initiatives by emphasizing workforce empowerment, leadership development, and continuous learning, enabling Saudi Business to foster highly engaged, innovative, and resilient teams (Fonseca, 2022; Gabriela-Livia, 2021; Para-González et al., 2021). The model encourages Saudi Business to implement talent management systems, succession planning, and performance-based reward structures that link employee development directly to Business goals (Zapletalová, 2023; Sayyd, 2024). In the Saudi cultural context, EFQM also helps Business shift from rigid hierarchical structures toward more participatory leadership models, aligned with Vision 2030's emphasis on cultural transformation (Sayyd, 2024). Innovation and digital transformation are also central pillars of both Vision 2030 and EFQM's application in Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom seeks to modernize its economy and strengthen its leadership in digital technologies. EFQM supports this by promoting the integration of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), automation, blockchain, IoT, and data analytics to improve service delivery, enhance operational efficiency, and respond to customer needs (Petrović et al., 2022; Aljohani & Albliwi, 2022). Saudi businesses are increasingly adopting these technologies to drive strategic decision-making, optimize supply chains, and strengthen competitiveness, directly contributing to Vision 2030's national objectives (Ezmigna et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the implementation of EFQM in Saudi Arabia faces several obstacles. Cultural resistance to change remains a major barrier, particularly among Business that maintain traditional management structures. Many Saudi Business continue to operate under centralized leadership styles that conflict with EFQM's participatory and innovation-driven approach, resulting in limited employee engagement and Business buy-in (Bukvič, 2022; Sayyd, 2024; Dhurandhar & Kumar, 2024).

Financial and resource limitations represent another challenge, especially for Saudi SMEs, which constitute a significant portion of the Kingdom's private sector. Implementing EFQM requires investments in training, technology, process reengineering, and performance measurement systems resources that many SMEs may struggle to secure (Aljabri et al., 2024; Biygautane & Clegg, 2024). This financial strain may prevent SMEs from fully realizing the benefits of EFQM. Leadership commitment and governance capabilities further influence EFQM's success in Saudi Arabia. Without sustained top management support and robust governance frameworks, many Businesses struggle to maintain long-term EFQM implementation. Effective leadership is essential to drive strategic alignment, ensure accountability, and monitor performance outcomes (Din et al., 2020; Alawwad, 2024).

Despite these challenges, Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 has created a highly supportive ecosystem that promotes EFQM adoption across both private and public sectors. The government has introduced regulatory reforms to simplify business licensing, enhance transparency, and improve the business environment (Aseery & Aseri, 2024; Ezmigna et al., 2024; Salam, 2022). Financial incentives, public-private partnerships, and state-sponsored funding programs provide essential support to Business investing in quality management and excellence frameworks. Public sector Business have also adopted EFQM as part of their service delivery reforms, setting benchmarks for private sector Business and further validating EFQM's relevance within the Saudi business environment (Ghreeb et al., 2021; Ibrahim et al., 2021). Empirical studies conducted in Saudi Arabia underscore EFQM's importance in supporting Business excellence. For example, Aljabri et al. (2024) developed EFQM-based performance evaluation models, while Aichouni et al. (2020) analyzed how strategic technology foresight can support long-term Business development. Additional studies emphasize

the role of knowledge management (Bocoya-Maline et al., 2024) and propose maturity frameworks to guide Saudi Business in their excellence journey (Dima et al., 2022).

Educational institutions in Saudi Arabia have also integrated EFQM principles into curricula and executive training programs, helping to cultivate a new generation of leaders capable of managing excellence-oriented Business aligned with Vision 2030's objectives (Abdullateef et al., 2023; Aseery & Aseri, 2024). These programs ensure a sustainable pipeline of talent that can lead continuous improvement efforts across various sectors. Corporate governance reforms launched under Vision 2030 complement EFQM's governance dimension by promoting transparency, accountability, risk management, and ethical leadership. Saudi regulators, such as the Capital Market Authority, have introduced governance standards that align with EFQM's emphasis on ethical conduct and stakeholder engagement (Alawwad, 2024).

Finally, the successful adoption of EFQM in Saudi Arabia requires customization to fit the Kingdom's specific cultural, regulatory, and economic environment. Rather than directly adopting global models, Saudi Business benefit from tailoring EFQM frameworks to address local business practices, sector needs, and stakeholder expectations (Martusewicz et al., 2024; Mishra, 2023). This localized approach strengthens Business readiness, enhances stakeholder participation, and ensures the long-term sustainability of EFQM-based excellence initiatives in alignment with Vision 2030. EFQM offers Saudi Arabia a comprehensive framework that supports Vision 2030's strategic transformation agenda. While challenges such as cultural resistance, financial limitations, and leadership capacity persist, Saudi Arabia's comprehensive policy reforms, regulatory support, financial incentives, and institutional infrastructure provide a robust foundation for EFQM adoption. By addressing these barriers and fully leveraging EFQM's alignment with Vision 2030, Saudi private sector Business can strengthen their competitiveness and contribute meaningfully to the Kingdom's long-term economic and social development.

3. Framework Development

The integration of the EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) model with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 presents a structured approach for driving corporate excellence by aligning quality management principles with national strategic goals. The EFQM model has long been recognized as a comprehensive framework for assessing and improving Business performance by focusing on key enablers such as leadership, strategy, people, processes, partnerships, and resources (Fonseca, 2022). Vision 2030, on the other hand, serves as a national transformation agenda aimed at diversifying the Saudi economy, fostering innovation, and enhancing global competitiveness (Deliou & Koemtzi, 2021). The justification for integrating these two frameworks lies in their shared emphasis on performance excellence, sustainability, and stakeholder engagement, which collectively contribute to the broader goal of achieving sustainable business success in Saudi private enterprises (de Menezes et al., 2022). This conceptual framework posits that Vision 2030 acts as a moderating variable that influences how EFQM enablers translate into corporate excellence outcomes. The relationship between these key variables is critical, as the effectiveness of EFQM implementation depends on external economic policies, regulatory frameworks, and national development priorities shaped by Vision 2030 (Din et al., 2020). This integration is particularly relevant in the Saudi context where private sector Business are expected to play a leading role in driving economic growth and innovation. Vision 2030's emphasis on empowering SMEs, expanding non-oil industries, and developing local capabilities creates an urgent need for structured quality management models such as EFQM. By adopting EFQM, Saudi businesses are better equipped to address challenges related to global competition, technological advancements, and changing consumer expectations, while also contributing to national socio-economic objectives.

The conceptual framework adapted in this study integrates EFQM enablers as key dimensions that contribute directly to achieving corporate excellence within the context of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. These enablers include process efficiency, human capital development, strategic policy alignment, and effective resource partnerships, all of which serve as critical drivers of business success (Mishra, 2023). Each enabler plays a distinct role in shaping Business performance. For example, process management promotes operational efficiency and fosters innovation, while human capital development cultivates a culture of continuous learning, employee engagement, and leadership growth (Para-González et al., 2021). Strategic alignment between policies and Business objectives ensures that businesses remain responsive to evolving market demands and national priorities (Jiménez & Cabrales, 2018). In addition, building strong partnerships and optimizing resource management allow Business to enhance their capabilities through collaboration, knowledge exchange, and shared value creation, all of which support the principles of sustainable development (Bocoya-Maline et al., 2024; Dima et al., 2022).

Notably, human capital development within the EFQM framework directly supports Vision 2030's national targets for workforce localization and talent enhancement. The Kingdom's significant investment in education, training, and employment diversification initiatives complements EFQM's focus on developing people as the foundation for

sustainable Business success. This parallel focus ensures that Saudi Business adopting EFQM not only improve their internal capabilities but also contribute to national labor market reforms and long-term social stability. Vision 2030 functions as a moderating factor within this framework, reinforcing the impact of EFQM enablers on business excellence outcomes. By providing a national blueprint for economic transformation, Vision 2030 encourages Business to align their operational strategies with broader socio-economic objectives, such as sustainability, digital transformation, and workforce empowerment (Petrović et al., 2022). This alignment ensures that EFQM adoption is not merely an internal quality management exercise but a strategic initiative that contributes to national competitiveness and long-term resilience (Sá et al., 2023). The relationship between these variables suggests that Vision 2030 serves as a catalyst that accelerates the effectiveness of EFQM practices by creating an enabling environment for innovation, regulatory compliance, and leadership development (Din et al., 2020). As Business increasingly integrate Vision 2030 principles into their EFQM strategies, they are better positioned to achieve corporate excellence, demonstrating the synergistic effect of aligning quality management with national development goals (Deliou & Koemtzi, 2021).

In addition, regulatory reforms and government support programs introduced under Vision 2030 further enhance the framework's effectiveness. Government incentives such as financial grants, tax reforms, and public-private partnerships play a vital role in encouraging private sector Business to adopt EFQM principles. These policies lower the barriers to quality management adoption and provide Saudi businesses with both the motivation and the capacity to embark on their excellence journeys. A graphical representation of the conceptual framework illustrates these relationships, depicting how EFQM enablers influence corporate excellence through the moderating role of Vision 2030. The visual model highlights the interconnections between quality management practices, national policy objectives, and business performance outcomes, emphasizing the importance of a holistic approach to achieving business excellence (Fonseca, 2022). By leveraging the EFQM model in conjunction with Vision 2030, Saudi private enterprises can systematically enhance their operational efficiency, stakeholder satisfaction, and strategic alignment, ensuring long-term sustainability in an increasingly competitive global market (Mishra, 2023).

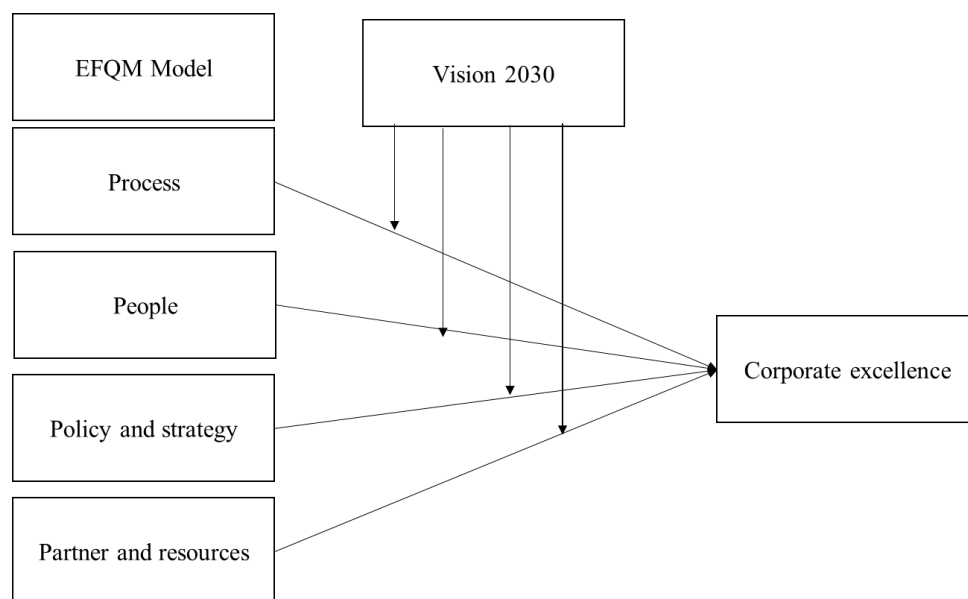


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

4. Discussion

The conceptual framework adapted in this study provides a strategic direction for Saudi private businesses by integrating the EFQM model with the national transformation objectives of Vision 2030. By positioning Vision 2030 as a moderating factor, the framework highlights how private businesses can leverage its strategic priorities such as innovation, human capital development, and digital transformation to enhance business excellence. The model underscores the importance of aligning corporate strategies with national economic goals to ensure long-term competitiveness and sustainability. The theoretical implications of this framework extend beyond Saudi Arabia, contributing to the broader discourse on quality management and business excellence. While the EFQM model has been widely adopted in European and global contexts, its integration with national policy initiatives, as demonstrated in this study, provides a new perspective on how business excellence frameworks can be tailored to fit country-specific transformation agendas (Alhamad et al., 2024).

This reinforces the idea that achieving excellence is not solely dependent on internal business efforts but is also shaped by external economic and policy drivers.

One of the key contributions of this framework lies in its capacity to serve as a bridge between macro-level policy objectives and micro-level Business practices. Vision 2030 sets forth national ambitions that require private sector engagement, while EFQM offers a systematic tool that businesses can adopt to operationalize these ambitions within their Business structures. The alignment between Vision 2030's policy priorities and EFQM's excellence criteria allows Business to convert national policy objectives into actionable business strategies. This is especially relevant in sectors such as healthcare, manufacturing, logistics, education, and financial services, where business performance directly contributes to national development indicators (Bocoya-Maline et al., 2024; Sá et al., 2023). From a practical standpoint, the framework offers business leaders and policymakers a structured approach to overcoming barriers to EFQM adoption. One of the key challenges facing Saudi private businesses is cultural resistance to change, particularly in industries with long-established operational norms. Many Saudi Business still operate within hierarchical, centralized management models that resist participatory leadership, employee empowerment, and data-driven decision-making processes encouraged by EFQM (Sayyid, 2024; Bukvič, 2022). The framework suggests that a top-down commitment to Vision 2030's objectives, coupled with structured EFQM adoption strategies, can facilitate smoother transitions toward quality-driven management practices (Aseery & Hatam Aseri, 2024).

Leadership plays a crucial role in mitigating cultural resistance. Senior leaders must champion EFQM adoption as part of their business vision, emphasizing its alignment with Vision 2030's strategic goals. This requires not only policy-level endorsement but also investment in leadership development programs that equip managers with the skills and mindsets necessary to foster cultures of innovation, transparency, and continuous improvement (Fonseca, 2022; Alshammari & Alghamdi, 2020). Additionally, financial constraints often hinder small and medium enterprises (SMEs) from implementing EFQM principles effectively. Many SMEs operate on limited budgets and may perceive EFQM implementation as costly and resource-intensive, especially when it involves investing in technology, staff training, and process reengineering (Aljabri et al., 2024). To address this, policymakers must introduce targeted incentives, such as financial subsidies and training programs, to encourage private businesses to adopt and sustain business excellence practices (Abdullateef et al., 2023). This is particularly important given the strategic role SMEs are expected to play in Saudi Arabia's economic diversification efforts.

Government support plays a critical role in fostering an enabling environment for EFQM implementation, particularly through public-private partnerships (PPPs) that drive infrastructure development and business process optimization (Biygautane & Clegg, 2024). These partnerships provide opportunities for knowledge sharing, capacity building, and resource pooling, allowing businesses to access technical expertise and support networks that may otherwise be unavailable. Furthermore, PPPs can help smaller Business integrate EFQM by connecting them to larger, more experienced companies that have already embedded business excellence models into their operations. Moreover, policy interventions that emphasize the importance of digital transformation and technological foresight, as outlined in Vision 2030, can enhance the adoption of EFQM by integrating advanced analytics and performance measurement tools into business operations (Aichouni et al., 2020). The integration of artificial intelligence, machine learning, data analytics, and digital platforms allows Saudi businesses to monitor real-time performance metrics, predict market shifts, and continuously refine processes. These digital enablers not only facilitate EFQM implementation but also contribute to the overall agility and resilience of businesses operating in increasingly dynamic markets (Petrović et al., 2022; Aljohani & Albliwi, 2022).

In parallel, the role of education and human capital development cannot be overlooked in EFQM implementation. Vision 2030's emphasis on developing a skilled, adaptable workforce aligns directly with EFQM's focus on employee empowerment, engagement, and learning (Aseery & Aseri, 2024). Universities and vocational training institutions in Saudi Arabia are increasingly integrating business excellence frameworks into their curricula, thereby producing graduates who are not only technically competent but also capable of driving Business change and continuous improvement (Abdullateef et al., 2023). This educational alignment ensures that the future Saudi workforce is equipped to sustain EFQM principles across all Business levels. While the conceptual framework provides a robust model for aligning EFQM with Vision 2030, it is important to acknowledge its potential limitations. The framework operates on the assumption that all Saudi private businesses have equal access to resources and government support, which may not be the case, especially for SMEs operating in less developed regions. Regional disparities in access to funding, infrastructure, and skilled labor may limit some businesses' ability to fully engage with EFQM practices, thus creating inconsistencies in adoption across the Kingdom's private sector (Biygautane & Clegg, 2024).

Additionally, the model assumes that businesses will fully embrace Vision 2030's strategic objectives without resistance, which may not always be feasible due to differences in leadership commitment and business readiness for change

(Altalhi, 2023). Business inertia, risk aversion, and limited exposure to international quality management standards may slow the pace of EFQM adoption. As such, customized support structures that provide continuous coaching, mentorship, and technical assistance are essential to help Business navigate the complexities of EFQM implementation. Another limitation lies in the lack of empirical validation; while the framework is grounded in existing literature and strategic analysis, future research should conduct empirical studies to test the relationships among EFQM enablers, Vision 2030's moderating role, and corporate excellence outcomes. Longitudinal studies would be particularly useful in assessing the long-term impact of Vision 2030 on business performance and quality management practices in Saudi private enterprises (Ezmigna et al., 2024). Empirical investigations could also help identify sector-specific variations in EFQM adoption, allowing for more targeted policy interventions and industry-specific excellence models.

Furthermore, while Vision 2030 provides a comprehensive national policy backdrop, sectoral nuances may require additional customization of EFQM frameworks. For instance, healthcare, manufacturing, logistics, education, and tourism may face unique quality management challenges that demand sector-specific excellence indicators. Future research can explore how EFQM enablers interact with sectoral regulatory frameworks, customer expectations, and innovation ecosystems to produce differentiated business outcomes (Martusewicz et al., 2024; Mishra, 2023). Despite these limitations, the adapted framework offers significant theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it extends the application of EFQM by demonstrating how national policy objectives can be operationalized within private sector Business through structured quality management systems. Practically, it provides Saudi business leaders and policymakers with a comprehensive roadmap for integrating business excellence models with Vision 2030's broader economic transformation agenda. By embedding EFQM into Business culture and strategy, businesses can strengthen their operational capabilities, enhance global competitiveness, and contribute meaningfully to the Kingdom's long-term sustainable development (Sá et al., 2023; Alhamad et al., 2024).

5. Conclusion

This study introduces a conceptual framework that integrates the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) model with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 to advance corporate excellence in the private sector. The framework identifies the EFQM enablers processes, people, policy and strategy, partnerships, and resources as essential components that drive Business success and continuous improvement. Vision 2030 is positioned as a moderating factor that strengthens and contextualizes the influence of these enablers by aligning quality management practices with the Kingdom's national economic diversification and development agenda. Through this integration, the framework provides a comprehensive and structured approach for Saudi private businesses to systematically improve operational efficiency, elevate customer and stakeholder satisfaction, and contribute meaningfully to sustainable national growth. The inclusion of Vision 2030 ensures that quality management efforts remain not only internationally competitive but also locally tailored to the unique challenges and opportunities present within Saudi Arabia's rapidly transforming economy. Unlike many generic global models, this framework reflects the Kingdom's specific policy environment, cultural dynamics, and strategic priorities, including workforce localization, innovation, and digital transformation.

This localized adaptation addresses some of the major barriers to EFQM implementation in Saudi Arabia, such as cultural resistance, resource limitations, and leadership commitment, by embedding business excellence within the broader national vision. Beyond its theoretical contributions, the conceptual framework offers valuable practical insights for multiple stakeholders, including policymakers, business leaders, and regulators who are tasked with driving Business development within the private sector. For policymakers, the framework highlights the importance of continued government support through financial incentives, training programs, and public-private partnerships that encourage widespread adoption of excellence models. For private business leaders, it provides a roadmap for embedding EFQM principles into daily operations while ensuring strategic alignment with national priorities. In addition, this framework adds to the growing body of research on quality management in emerging economies, offering an important contextualization of the EFQM model within a national transformation strategy. Its applicability can serve as a foundation for further academic inquiry.

Future research should focus on empirically validating this framework through both qualitative case studies and quantitative assessments to test its effectiveness across various sectors and Business sizes. Industry-specific investigations in sectors such as healthcare, financial services, education, and tourism may reveal important sectoral variations in how EFQM principles are implemented and adapted. Moreover, comparative studies with other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries could provide valuable regional insights and identify best practices that may inform broader business excellence strategies across the Middle East. Ultimately, the framework developed in this study

provides a practical, adaptable, and policy-aligned pathway for Saudi private businesses to achieve sustainable corporate excellence while contributing directly to the ambitious objectives of Vision 2030.

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